

Seven Ways to Make Your Customers Feel Important

If we put all of our focus on processes, systems, strategies and procedures we may lose track of something very important. Customers are people first.

Two important pre-reading notes: Before you chose to read or not read this article, let make two things clear. Everyone has Customers. Even if you work in an internal staff department in a large firm, you have Customers. They are the people you provide work to. And second, don't be put off by the term Customer. Maybe you call them Clients, Students, Patients, or (heaven forbid!) Users. If one of those words works better for you, read that word every time you read Customer. Now that I have eliminated your reasons for not reading, please continue . . .

We can read lots of books and articles about Customer Service strategies and how to build processes that will serve Customers more successfully. All of these things are valuable, but if we put all of our focus on processes, systems, strategies and procedures we may lose track of something very important.

Customers are people first.

This means that each of your Customers, like everyone else, wants to feel important. It a universal truth - we all want that feeling, and will gravitate towards those that make us feel that way.

Hint: Having Customers gravitate towards you is a very good thing.

Here are seven ways that you as an individual, regardless of any corporate policies or systems, can make Customers feel more important, written from the Customer's perspective:

Please use my name I know I may have a Customer or registration number and that I might need to give that to you. But I also know that once you put that number in the system, you know my name. Use it. If I hand you my credit card, now you know my name too. Please use it.

I want to be a part of the in crowd That's why I like being invited into Frequent Flyer clubs, frequent buyer clubs or anything that provides me with discounts, special services, education or surprises. If you have this kind of club, invite me to join. If you don't have one yet, please think about starting one.

Ask me for my advicel have an opinion, and if asked in the right way, at the right time, when I know you really care about the answer, I'll give you that advice. Opinion cards may be OK, but I would love to be asked personally. Give me the chance to tell you what I think, and I'll reward you with more of my business. I don't often get asked for my opinion and it feels good. And who knows, you might even get a great idea for a new product or service.

Acknowledge me I know you are busy sometimes. I can see the line. I even understand that your system might be down, or that you have five people in the phone queue. I've been there, I work too. But when I call or come by, acknowledge that I am there and let me know you are glad I'm in the line. A smile and a hello, or a We'll be with you shortly will go a long way. Acknowledge me and I'll understand. Ignore me, and well, how do you feel when you've been ignored?

Surprise me A little extra something with my order or a hand-written note would be nice. A special discount just because or a free sample of dessert. It doesn't have to be a big thing, and it doesn't have to be every time. If you get a good surprise, do you want to share it with others? Me too.

Apologize I hate it when people try to prove they were right, or don't mention that fact that the order is three days late, or the surcharge can't be removed, or the item is out of stock. But again, I know things do happen. When things do go wrong though, please give me a simple apology. Here's the funniest thing. When you make a mistake, and then apologize (perhaps even including a surprise of some sort) I'll love you more than ever. Apologies and good service recoveries are so rare that you can take my dissatisfaction and turn it into loyalty, if you will do this right.

Listen Most all of the other things I've told you require you to listen. I can tell when you are really listening to me and that makes me feel very good because true listening is rare, sometimes even at home. Listen to my concerns. Listen to my ideas. Listen to my order, so we don't have any misunderstandings. When you really listen, you can't believe how good that makes me feel.

All of us can do most of these things each day. When we do we will make our work more enjoyable, easier, and quite likely will begin creating legions of loyal Customers immediately.

And before you go, read these seven things again, with the voice of one of your Customers in your head, as a reminder of how you can make each of your Customers feel more important.